

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 24, 2023

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

The Honorable Richard R. Verma  
Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources  
U.S. Department of State

Dear Deputy Secretary Verma:

As you assume your new role as Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources, I write to call your attention to inconsistent information provided by the State Department and the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) to the Senate and, specifically, to my office. The inconsistent information concerned open recommendations and questioned costs.

Over the years, my office has sought information from the State Department to conduct effective oversight and provide necessary accountability to the American people. Transparency and accurate information are crucial for ensuring the effective functioning of our government, particularly when it comes to matters as significant as the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.

On March 15, 2023, I sent a letter to the State Department inquiring about unresolved recommendations from SIGAR relating to nearly \$40 million in questioned costs.<sup>1</sup> These recommendations had been open for over two years at the time of my correspondence.<sup>2</sup> The State Department, in its response, provided reasons for the delay and claimed that many of the questioned costs were outstanding because SIGAR's accounting practices were flawed.<sup>3</sup> SIGAR, however, told me a dramatically different story than the one I was told by the State Department.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, SIGAR claimed "State misrepresented to [Congress] the manner in which SIGAR conducts its audits and the qualifications of the firms engaged by SIGAR."<sup>5</sup> These inconsistencies raise concerns about the accuracy and reliability of the information the State Department provided my office.

You now hold a key leadership role within the Department, and it is crucial that you address these concerns in order to restore confidence in the State Department's commitment to

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Senator Charles Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, to Antony Blinken, Secretary, U.S. Department of State, (March 15, 2023) [https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley\\_to\\_blinken\\_-\\_sigar\\_findings.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley_to_blinken_-_sigar_findings.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Naz Durakoğlu, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, to Senator Charles Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee (May 1, 2023) (on file with comm. staff).

<sup>4</sup> Letter from John Sopko, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, SIGAR, to Senator Charles Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee (May 17, 2023) (on file with comm. staff).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

transparency and accountability. By proactively addressing these issues, you can set a positive precedent and strengthen the relationship between the State Department, Congress, and SIGAR.

So that Congress can independently assess the competing narratives and conduct effective oversight, please provide answers to the following questions no later than June 7, 2023:

1. Please respond to SIGAR's letter (attached for reference) and address every inconsistency between it and the State Department's letter (also attached for reference). For inconsistencies which the State Department believes SIGAR is incorrect, please provide supporting records.<sup>6</sup>
2. What steps do you plan to take to identify the root causes of these inconsistencies and rectify them?
3. How will you ensure that accurate and reliable information is provided to Congress and its oversight requests moving forward?
4. Will you commit to working with my office and SIGAR to address these concerns and provide the necessary transparency and accountability? If not, why not?

Thank you for your attention to this important issue, and I look forward to your prompt response. Should you have any questions, please contact my committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Budget

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<sup>6</sup> "Records" include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (e-mails, email attachments, and any other electronically-created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether or not they resulted in final documents).